

Message Text

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S E C R E T ROME 17701

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FOR THE SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EG, IS, XF, IT

SUBJECT: SADAT'S REACTION TO ISRAELI POSITION ON MIDEAST PEACE

REF: ROME 17622

1. I CALLED TODAY ON FOREIGN MINISTER RUMOR AT HIS REQUEST TO RECEIVE AMPLIFICATION OF PRESIDENT LEONE'S BRIEF REMARKS DECEMBER 21 ON HIS DISCUSSION WITH SADAT. RUMOR INFORMED ME THAT IN HIS AND FAHMY'S PRESENCE SADAT HAD SAID TO LEONE QUOTE YOU COULD HELP A GREAT DEAL WITH YOUR AMERICAN FRIENDS IF YOU WOULD LET THEM KNOW THAT THE LATEST ISRAELI SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER MOVES TOWARD PEACE ARE COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE AND NO BASIS FOR DISCUSSION UNQUOTE.

2. SADAT WENT ON TO RELATE HIS REJECTION OF THE ISRAELI PROPOSALS TO THE QUESTION OF THE EXTENT OF ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL IN THE SINAI. SADAT EMPHASIZED THAT THE EGYPTIANS ARE GENUINELY INTERESTED IN PEACE AND WOULD NOT BE REOPENING THE SUEZ CANAL IF THIS WERE NOT THE CASE. THE STRATEGIC PASSES IN THE SINAI ARE ESSENTIAL IN SADAT'S VIEW TO PROVIDE EGYPT WITH THE GUARANTEES NECESSARY TO PROTECT THE CANAL.

3. IN RUMOR'S VIEW FAHMY'S RECENT HARSH HARD-LINE STATEMENTS ARE CAREFULLY DESIGNED WITH PUBLIC

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CONSUMPTION IN MIND, BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE EGYPT.

RUMOR BELIEVES THAT THEY ARE PARTICULARLY DESIGNED TO PRE-EMPT EXTREMIST ARAB CRITICISM OF EGYPTIAN WILLINGNESS TO GO THAT EXTRA MILE IN SEARCH OF PEACE. RUMOR EMPHASIZED THAT SADAT HAD SAID THE EGYPTIANS QUOTE DON'T WANT ANOTHER WAR AND CAN'T AFFORD ANOTHER WAR, WITH THE MANY EGYPTIAN DOMESTIC PROBLEMS YET TO BE RESOLVED UNQUOTE.

4. SADAT TOLD HIS ITALIAN GUESTS THAT HE AGREED COMPLETELY WITH YOUR STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH TOWARD A RESOLUTION OF THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION. HE URGED, HOWEVER, THAT TWO IMPORTANT DATES BE BORNE IN MIND, BEFORE WHICH SIGNIFICANT MOVEMENT TOWARD SOLUTIONS WOULD BE PARTICULARLY USEFUL. THERE ARE (A) THE BREZHNEV VISIT TO EGYPT AT THE END OF THE SECOND WEEK IN JANUARY AND (B) THE EXPIRATION OF THE UN PEACEKEEPING MANDATE SIX MONTHS HENCE. SADAT STRESSED THAT ANY KIND OF REAL MOVEMENT TOWARD SOLUTIONS BEFORE BREZHNEV ARRIVES IN EGYPT WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL TO SADAT IN HIS CONDUCT OF THE MEETINGS.

5. RUMOR ADDED THAT THE SHAH WAS ALSO QUITE STRONG IN HIS PRO-WESTERN VIEWS IN HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH LEONE AND RUMOR. AT THE SAME TIME THE SHAH MADE IT CLEAR THAT IRAN IS AN ISLAMIC COUNTRY. HE HAS HIGH ESTEEM FOR THE US AND FOR ITALY. HE HOPES THERE WILL BE NO WAR AND ASSURED THE ITALIANS THAT HE WOULD DO HIS PART TO MAINTAIN THE PEACE. HE WARNED, HOWEVER, THAT UNLESS THERE IS DEMONSTRABLE MOVEMENT BEFORE TOO LONG, THE EXTREMISTS IN THE ARAB CAMP WILL WIN THE DAY AND FORCE VIOLENT ACTION.

6. I THANKED RUMOR FOR HIS FULL REPORT AND ASSURED HIM YOU WOULD BE MOST INTERESTED IN HAVING THIS INFORMATION. I ASSURED HIM AT THE SAME TIME THAT YOU ARE MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO MAINTAIN THE PACE OF DEVELOPMENTS TOWARD PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND THAT EVERY APPROPRIATE PRESSURE IN THAT DIRECTION WOULD WITHOUT DOUBT BE BROUGHT TO BEAR. VOLPE

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